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ABSTRACT: This article offers, in the first place, an overview on women's healthcare in relation to childbirth in ancient Mesopotamia, as an introduction that helps to evaluate the meaning of the 7th century Assur text BAM 248 within therapeutic cuneiform texts on childbirth. We proceed to analyse the variety of therapeutic approaches to childbirth present in BAM 248, which brings together

various healing devices to help a woman give birth quickly and safely. We analyse the text in its entirety as an example of intersection between different medical approaches to childbirth, given the number of differences in the complexity of remedies, in the *materia medica* employed, in the methods of preparation and application, even in the technical knowledge required and also, most probably, in the social origin and/or use of the remedies in question.

## The physical activity of parturition in ancient Egypt: textual and epigraphical sources

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**ABSTRACT:** Many medical and magical texts concerning childbirth and delivery are known from ancient Egypt. Most of them are spells, incantations, remedies and prescriptions for the woman in labour in order to accelerate the delivery or protect the unborn child and parturient. The medical and magical texts do not contain any descriptions of parturition itself, but there are some literary, astronomical and mythological texts, as well as a few incantations, which describe the biological act of childbirth and also miscarriage in more detail. Besides the textual sources, the decoration of temple walls and *mammisis* (birth houses), as well as illustrations on a birth brick provide an insight into the moment of delivery. In this paper, I focus on the «scientific» depiction of the biological act of childbirth, on how it is described in non-medical sources. Although the main sources are mythological-theological texts with numerous analogies, it is remarkable how many details they provide. They contain descriptions that would be expected in the context of medical sources.

## For mothers and sisters: care of the reproductive female body in the medico-ritual world of early and medieval Japan

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**ABSTRACT:** While married female members of the Japanese aristocracy followed the ideal of bearing children, female Buddhist novices and ordained women, often belonging to the aristocracy themselves, had to abstain from sexual activity and reproduction in accordance with the ordination rules. Infertility was considered with disdain by the first group, whereas not bearing children was the utmost expression of leading a virtuous life for the second group. However, both groups were concerned with keeping their physical bodies healthy: some to become mothers, the others to live as nuns or religious sisters. Focusing on

the early medieval period, this paper examines various sources to illuminate the ways in which women were cared for and the kind of views and ideas that informed this care. Instead of looking at the ancient methods of treatment through a modern «scientific» lens and sorting them into «proto-scientific» and «superstitious» categories, medico-ritual and religious views on the female body are explored as facets of the worldview prevalent in the period under consideration. Special attention is paid to relevant chapters of the first medical work produced in Japan, the *Ishinpō*, compiled by a court physician, Tanba no Yasuyori, in the late 10th century CE. The investigation of other sources, such as Buddhist legends and doctrinal texts, suggests that women were recommended to seek to overcome their femaleness altogether by transforming their female bodies into male bodies in order to reach ultimate «healing» in terms of salvation. In lay circles, however, the Buddhist divinities and other powerful deities were worshipped to ensure this worldly «healing» in terms of successful procreation and continuation of the family line.

## Childbirth in aristocratic households of Heian Japan

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1.—Delivery and danger. 2.—The ritual economy of childbirth. 3. Sights, smells, colours, and sounds during the labour. 4.—Midwives and physicians. 5.—Co-existing paradigms of knowledge.

**ABSTRACT:** This paper focuses on childbirth in Japan's aristocratic households during the Heian period (794-1185). Drawing on various sources, including court diaries, visual sources, literary records, and Japan's first medical collection, with its assortment of gynaecological and obstetric prescriptions, as well as Buddhist and other ritual texts, this short excursion into the cultural history of childbirth offers an insight into how childbirth was experienced and managed in Heian Japan. In particular, it addresses the variety of ideas, knowledge systems and professionals involved in framing and supporting the process of childbirth in elite households. In so doing, it casts light on the complex background of early Japanese medicine and healthcare for women.

## She will give birth immediately. Pregnancy and childbirth in medieval Hebrew medical texts produced in the Mediterranean West

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1.—Introduction. 2.—The corpus of Hebrew medical literature and the management of pregnancy and childbirth. 3.—Dealing with conception and pregnancy 4.—The management of childbirth. 4.—Midwives and medical practice. 5.—Conclusion.

**ABSTRACT:** This essay approaches the medieval Hebrew literature on women's healthcare, with the aim of analysing notions and ideas regarding fertility, pregnancy and childbirth, as conveyed in the texts that form the corpus. Firstly, the work discusses the approach of written texts to pregnancy and childbirth

as key elements in the explanation of women's health and the functioning of the female body. In this regard it also explores the role of this approach in the creation of meanings for both the female body and sexual difference. Secondly, it examines female management of pregnancy and childbirth as recorded in Hebrew medical literature. It pays attention to both the attitudes expressed by the authors, translators and copyists regarding female practice, as well as to instances and remedies derived from «local» traditions —that is, from women's experience— in the management of pregnancy and childbirth, also recorded in the texts. Finally, the paper explores how medical theories alien to, or in opposition to, Judaism were adopted or not and, at times, adapted to Jewish notions with the aim of eliminating tensions from the text, on the one hand, and providing Jewish practitioners with adequate training to retain their Christian clientele, on the other.

## ARTICLES

### The image of animal magnetism in fictional literature: the cases of Poe, Doyle and Du Maurier

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1.—Introduction. 2.—*The facts in the case of M. Valdemar*, Edgar Allan Poe. 3.—*The great Keinplatz experiment*, Conan Doyle. 4.—*Trilby*, Du Maurier. 5.—Conclusions.

**ABSTRACT:** In this article, we focus on the social image of the phenomenon known as mesmerism, or animal magnetism, through analysis of the works: *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar* (1845) by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Great Keinplatz Experiment* (1885) by Conan Doyle and *Trilby* (1894) by George Du Maurier. We describe the stereotype of the mesmerist and the uses of mesmerism observed. We pay attention to the spaces and actors of the mesmeric transcript presented in the stories. We consider the reception of these stories by the public and the relationship of the authors with mesmeric and hypnotic knowledge. Nowadays, academic researchers in the discipline of psychology publish articles and books on popular myths about hypnosis in attempts to depict the distorted images related to this phenomenon. This distorted image of the hypnotic process and the hypnotist derives from «circus» hypnotism shows (stage hypnosis), the cinema, television and fictional literature. Works of fiction represent a unique and invaluable source of information, ideas, speculations, concerns and opportunities around animal magnetism and hypnosis, and the exploration and analysis of this literature is an essential chapter in any historical study of this topic. We see how the literary use of mesmerism by Poe, Doyle and Du Maurier is not chance or peripheral, with all three being intellectually interested in and stimulated by these ideas

### The reaction of *Practicantes* in Medicine and Surgery to the creation of a Nursing qualification in 1915

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1.—Introduction. 2.—Background. 3.—The case for the official recognition of nurses in Spain. 4.—The rhetoric of *practicantes* against the creation of a nursing degree and nursing studies. 5.—Characteristics of the reaction of *practicantes* to the legalization of nursing practices. 6.—Conclusions.

**ABSTRACT:** This paper deals with the arguments justifying the Government's passage of the Sovereign Ordinance of 7 May 1915, which officially established a course and qualification in Nursing in Spain; and examines how and why Medical and Surgical *practicantes* (medical assistants) reacted to this decision. The ordinance legalized nurses' care practices, thereby providing official recognition for a healthcare profession other than that of *practicante*. The Government based its approval on three arguments: the physicians' recommendations; deficiencies in the basic and professional training of *practicantes*"; and the fact that the nursing profession emerged as a new path providing Spanish women with an opportunity to acquire training and join the labour force. The new legislation was met with outrage by *practicantes*, who opposed it in the belief that it equated nurses' scope of practice to their own and thus jeopardized their future employment prospects. Additionally, they contended that nurses would be legally qualified to perform the same medical practices as they did, despite receiving their degrees in a shorter period of time with a less prolonged internship, at a lower economic cost and through less effort. Professional associations of *practicantes* immediately launched a campaign against the Sovereign Ordinance, meeting with the Minister of Public Instruction to request its repeal, organizing a massive telegram campaign directed at the minister, and requesting the nullity of the ordinance before the Supreme Court, which would reject the appeal by the *practicantes* two years later. Professional associations also used their press organs to publish the arguments of prominent *practicantes*, who vehemently voiced their opposition in extremist, uncompromising, radical, and ironic terms, arising from a strong gender ideology in tune with the patriarchal mentality of the era and the dominant position that male hegemony conferred to *practicantes*.

## **Tuberculosis and phthisiophobia in Argentina: discourses and conflicts in the construction of the Ascochinga sanatorium, 1925**

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**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to analyze the positions and arguments of various state and social actors around the construction by the "Argentine Medical Establishment" company of a sanatorium for attending to tuberculosis sufferers in the town of Ascochinga, Córdoba, Argentina in 1925. It examines the views on tuberculosis of distinct actors in Córdoba province, beginning with Ascochinga's

neighbors, business owners and the President of the Hygiene Council of the province, the President of the Climatology and Climatherapy Commission and the Public Prosecutor, and their arguments for and against the construction of the sanatorium. Although several studies have been performed on the construction and organization of various facilities to house tuberculosis patients, there has been no analysis of the conflicts that the construction generated in the society, as part of the development of institutions for attending to tuberculosis patients. Our hypothesis is that «phthisiophobia» (fear of contagion of the disease) was the core element of the arguments used to attack or defend the development of the sanatorium. We consider the case study of Ascochinga sanatorium a paradigmatic case for understanding the discourses and perceptions of the Argentine society around tuberculosis.

### **Boundaries and integrity in the «Social Contract for Spanish Science», 1907-1939**

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**ABSTRACT:** This article analyzes the relationship between science and politics in Spain in the early 20th century from the perspective of the Social Contract for Science. The article shows that a genuine social contract for science was instituted in Spain during this period, although some boundary and integrity problems emerged. These problems are analyzed, showing that the boundary problems were a product of the conservative viewpoint on the relationship between science and politics, while the integrity problems involved the activation of networks of influence in the awarding of scholarships to study abroad. Finally, the analysis reveals that these problems did not invalidate the Spanish social contract for science

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